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## On the Text of Amos v. 26; vi. 1, 2; vii. 2.

CHARLES C. TORREY, PH.D.

ANDOVER, MASS.

IN Amos v. 26 the Massoretic pointing of the two nouns **מִבְּנֵי** and **בִּיּוֹן** is very troublesome. If we have here names of Babylonian-Assyrian gods, as most recent authorities conclude, it is remarkable that our text should point both according to the form **קַמְּוִל**, which, at least in the case of **בִּיּוֹן** (Kēwān), certainly cannot have represented the actual pronunciation. If, on the other hand, we suppose these to be common nouns, meaning respectively 'tabernacle' and 'pedestal,' or something of the kind (cf. W. R. Smith, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 400 f.), the forms chosen are still remarkable, from the standpoint of etymology.

Nor has it been found easy to explain the Massoretic reading simply on the theory that the original pronunciation was lost. Various conjectures have been made; for example, G. Hoffmann (*Z.A.T.W.*, 1883, p. 113) suggested that **מִבְּנֵי** may have been thus pointed ("als nomen actionis") after the analogy of **בִּיּוֹן**; the pointing in the case of the latter he makes no attempt to explain, though regarding the word as a corruption of the name of the deity Kēwān. So previously G. Baur, *Der Prophet Amos*, 1847, p. 369.

For the attempt to connect Greek *κίων* with **בִּיּוֹן**, see Muss-Arnolt's "Semitic Words in Greek and Latin," in *Transactions of the Amer. Philol. Association*, 1892, p. 74 f.

There is a noticeable lack of evidence that the Massoretic pointing of these words is connected with any old or well-established tradition. The LXX read neither word in this way, and the testimony of the other early versions is for the most part either doubtful or squarely opposed to the Massoretic. **מִבְּנֵי** has the solitary support of the Targum, **סיכות**. For **בִּיּוֹן**, besides Targum **בִּיּוֹן**, there is the testimony of Aquila, Symmachus, *χῑων* (notice, however, that according to Jerome their reading was *chion*).

It seems to me pretty certain that for the form of these two names in our present text we are indebted to the misplaced wit or zeal of the Massoretic. It is the familiar trick of fitting the pointing of one

word to the consonant skeleton of another, as in **תַּפֶּת, מֶלֶךְ, עֲשֵׂתָרֶת**, and so on. In this case, the pointing is taken from the word **שִׁקּוּן**, 'abomination.' Cf. 1 Kings xi. 5, 7, **שִׁקּוּן** substituted for **אלהים** (false gods), cf. LXX and vs. 33; Ezek. vii. 20; Dan. ix. 27, xi. 31, xii. 11, **שִׁקּוּן שֵׁמִים** etc. for **בעל שמים** (cf. Nestle in *Z. A. T. W.*, 1884, p. 248); and many other passages. It is quite likely that the traditional pronunciation of **סַכַּת** (Sakkūth?) may have first suggested **שִׁקּוּן** to some one. Of course the interpretation that sees in this verse mention of foreign deities by name is already presupposed by the presence of the word **בִּיכּוּב** in the text.

VI. 1, 2. The subject with which the prophet is dealing in this chapter—in fact, one of the most prominent ideas in all his prophecy—is the over-confidence of Israel. Verse 1<sup>a</sup> begins the attack afresh: "Woe to the easy-going, the confident among you!" and vss. 3 f. (however interpreted) continue in the same strain. But the intervening portion, 1<sup>b</sup>, 2, so far as it can be understood at all, seems to break the connection of thought most effectually, unless one avoids part of the difficulty by supposing the prophet to be speaking ironically. Verse 2 is hanging in mid-air; some of the best commentators cancel it as an interpolation, others enclose it in dashes, as a sort of parenthesis. No one has ever proposed even a passable translation of 1<sup>b</sup>. Making it refer to the rich nobility of Israel, as seems necessary, it is rendered: "The distinguished of the chief of the nations, and the house of Israel come to them" (whatever that may mean!). So far as I know, the only open rebellion against the text here (aside from Geiger's conjecture, **כְּנִי** for **בְּאוּ**) is that of Wellhausen (*Skizzen*, v.), who fails to make anything out of **וּבְאוּ לָהֶם**, and leaves a gap in his translation at this point.

The trouble begins with the awkward **נִקְּבִי**, after which there is hardly a word in the verse that seems to be in its proper place or admits of a natural translation. The fact is already sufficiently established that the LXX read here **נִקְּפוּ** (Vollers in *Z.A.T.W.*, 1883, p. 267; cf. Geiger, *Urschrift*, p. 97; further attested by the Syr. Hex. *qtaph(u)*; cf. Ephrem Syr., *Comm.* in loc.).

The root **נִקַּף** occurs in the O. T. in two distinct usages: 1. with the signification 'strike down, knock off' (olives from the tree), Is. x. 34; Job xix. 26 (?); cf. also **נִקְּףָה** Is. xvii. 6, xxiv. 13. This was the verb understood here by the LXX (*ἀπερρύγησαν*, etc.), and as it occurs only in Pi'el, the form read was **נִקְּפוּ**. 2. With the signification 'make a circuit, go around in course.' The Qal occurs

in Is. xxix. 1 (used of the succession of feasts); the Hiph'il is used in the same way (a succession of festal days) in Job i. 5. The Hiph'il is further used like סבב, with a direct object, signifying 'to go about'; e.g. Is. xv. 8. This נקף is the verb originally intended in this passage, and the form was the Qal imperative plural נקפו, a form identical with that of the Pi'el perf. 3d plur., read by the LXX. Accordingly, ובאו is to be read as imperative; בית ישראל is vocative; vs. 1 should end with שמרון. The translation: "Woe to the easy-going in Zion, and the confident in Samaria! Make the round of the foremost nations, and come to them, house of Israel! Pass over to Calneh, and see; go on from thence to Hamath Rabba; then go down to Gath of the Philistines; are ye fairer than these kingdoms, or is your territory more extensive than theirs?"<sup>1</sup>

For באו להם, see 2 Sam. v. 23; Is. lx. 4, 5. Cf. with this use of ראשית 1 Sam. xv. 21. Concerning the historical events and conditions alluded to in the passage, it is impossible to do more than conjecture. Our knowledge of the history of that time is only very fragmentary. The reverses just suffered by Gath, Calneh, and Hamath, to which Amos refers, may have been such as seemed important at the time, but were soon forgotten as far severer blows followed. The recent Assyrian campaigns had not been fruitless. To make verse 2 refer to certain known conquests of Sargon (in which case it must be a later addition) is unwarranted.

VII. 2. The present reading, ויהיה אם בלה . . . ואמר, is grammatically impossible. The tense of ואמר cannot be made to square with those immediately preceding. It is in these, however, that the trouble lies, as the context shows. ויהיה is out of place, for there can be no reference here to future time or to repetition of the action in past time (as in Judg. vi. 3; Num. xxi. 9, etc.). Wellhausen emends to וידי, and as this fails to remove the difficulty, substitutes טרם for אם, though remarking that the imperfect tense is regularly used with טרם (*Skizzen*, v. 87). There is something wrong with אם בלה, plainly. By simply reading וידי הא מבלה, all grammatical difficulties are removed, and the translation gained is that most favored by the context: "But as they (the locusts) were about making an end of the herbage of the land, I said," etc. Cf. ואכלה, vs. 4.

<sup>1</sup> Following Geiger's emendation, which reads הטובים אתם and transposes the suffixes at the end of vs. 2. It is not necessary to suppose, however, that the sense of the passage was wilfully perverted; <sup>1</sup> being misunderstood, the rest might easily follow.